



STATEMENTS & RELEASES

Statement from the Press Secretary Regarding Executive Grants of Clemency

LAW & JUSTICE

Issued on: December 23, 2020



Today, President Donald J. Trump granted Full Pardons to 26 individuals and commuted part or all of the sentences of an additional 3 individuals.

James Kassouf — President Trump granted a full pardon to James Kassouf. This pardon is supported by former Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi, Representative David Joyce, Representative Darrell Issa, Pastor Darrell Scott, and many friends in Northeast Ohio. Mr. Kassouf pled guilty in 1989 to one count of filing a false tax return. Since his conviction, he has devoted extensive time and resources to supporting causes such as Doctors Without Borders, the Red Cross, and his local church and fire department. Mr. Kassouf’s pastor, who also writes in support of today’s action, highlights Mr. Kassouf’s “vision” to make his community a better place. Mr. Kassouf is dedicated to revitalizing the city of Cleveland and has been intensely involved in the Northeast Ohio community.

Mary McCarty — President Trump granted Mary McCarty a full pardon. Former Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi and Christopher Ruddy are among those supportive of Ms. McCarty. Ms. McCarty was a longtime public servant in Palm Beach, Florida, serving as

one of its County Commissioners. In 2009, she pled guilty to one count of honest services fraud. The Supreme Court has since interpreted that statute more narrowly, meaning that Ms. McCarty's conduct might not be criminally prosecuted today.

Christopher Wade — President Trump granted a full pardon to Christopher Wade. Wade's pardon is supported by Isaac Perlmutter, Mark Templeton, and numerous current and former law-enforcement officials. Mr. Wade served two years' probation after pleading guilty to various cyber-crimes. Since his conviction, he has shown remorse and sought to make his community a safer place.

Christopher II X, formerly Christopher Anthony Bryant — President Trump granted a full pardon to Christopher II X, a prominent community leader. This Federal pardon is supported by Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky as well as Tori Murden McClure, the President of Spalding University, among others. Mr. II X is a powerful example of the possibility of redemption. For a two-decade period ending in 1998, Mr. II X battled a severe addiction to both cocaine and marijuana. In this period he committed numerous state and federal offenses. Since overcoming his drug dependency and following his release from prison for the last time over 20 years ago, Mr. II X has become an acknowledged community leader in his hometown of Louisville, Kentucky. Today, Mr. II X runs a non-profit organization, Game Changers, which is dedicated to guiding youth to productive, meaningful lives. He is also widely credited as a trusted voice of reason and peace in Louisville that both sides turn to if tensions arise between the police and local community. In recognition of the many contributions to his community, in December 2019 Governor Matt Bevin of Kentucky issued Mr. II X a full pardon for each of his State crimes. Today's Federal pardon achieves the same for Mr. II X's Federal cocaine offenses.

Cesar Lozada — President Trump granted a full pardon to Cesar Lozada. This act of clemency is supported by U.S. Representative-elect Maria Elvira Salazar and members of Mr. Lozada's community. Mr. Lozada, an immigrant from Cuba, started a small business cleaning and servicing pools in Miami-Dade County. Since then, his business, now a pool equipment company, has grown and employs dozens of people. Today's pardon addresses a mistake Mr. Lozada made in 2004 of conspiring to distribute marijuana, for

which Mr. Lozada took full responsibility, served his sentence of 14 months in prison and 3 years supervised release, and paid a \$10,000 fine. Mr. Lozada volunteers on weekends at a charity mission and serves food to the poor.

Joseph Martin Stephens — President Trump granted Joseph Martin Stephens a full pardon. Mr. Stephens' Federal conviction – a guilty plea in 2008 to being a felon in possession of a firearm – is predicated on a State felony conviction from 1991, when he was 19. Although the state offered Mr. Stephens deferred adjudication, he turned it down. When Federal authorities prosecuted him nearly 20 years later for possessing a firearm, he took full responsibility for his conduct and served a sentence of 18 months in prison and 3 years on supervised release. Clemency for Mr. Stephens is supported by business associates.

Andrew Barron Worden — President Trump granted a full pardon to Andrew Barron Worden, an entrepreneur who has worked extensively in the solar energy field. Mr. Worden has exhibited a decades-long commitment to philanthropy, including founding charitable foundations and teaching and research grant programs. Mr. Worden enjoys the support of business associates and his community for this pardon, which pertains to a 1995 conviction for wire fraud. At the time, Mr. Worden had just graduated from college and made mistakes in running an investment firm he founded. However, Mr. Worden voluntarily stopped his wrongful conduct and began to repay his victims before any criminal charges were filed, an action his sentencing judge called “extraordinary.”

Robert Coughlin — President Trump granted a full pardon to Robert Coughlin. This act of clemency has the support of former interim U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia Jeffrey Taylor and Adam Ciongoli, former counselor to Attorney General Ashcroft. Mr. Coughlin pled guilty to a single count of conflict of interest in performing his duties as a Department of Justice official. He was charged for doing favors on matters before the Department of Justice in exchange for sports and concert tickets. Mr. Coughlin voluntarily surrendered his law license and was sentenced to 30 days in a halfway house and 200 hours of community service. Mr. Coughlin is remorseful and has volunteered in

his community through organizations including Meals on Wheels and Toys for Tots. Recently, he was reinstated to the D.C. Bar and wishes to put his mistakes behind him.

John Boulton and Peter Atkinson — President Trump granted a full pardon to John Boulton and Peter Atkinson. Mr. Boulton is the former chief financial officer and Mr. Atkinson is the former vice president of Hollinger International. Both men were convicted as part of an alleged fraud scheme involving Lord Conrad Black, and both served nearly a year in prison for mail fraud. President Trump previously pardoned Lord Black, and for similar reasons and with the support of Lord Black, former Assistant U.S. Attorney Ronald Safer, and David Nathanson, he has now granted a full pardon to Messrs. Boulton and Atkinson.

Joseph Occhipinti — President Trump granted a full pardon to Joseph Occhipinti, a 70-year-old former Supervisory Special Agent with the Immigration and Naturalization Service. This pardon is supported by the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, National Association of Police Organizations, and Representative Christopher Smith. In 1991, Mr. Occhipinti was convicted of conspiracy to violate civil rights under the color of law and making false statements. Mr. Occhipinti had a 22-year highly decorated career in which he earned 76 separate commendations, including three from Attorneys General. Mr. Occhipinti's 37 month long sentence was commuted by President George H.W. Bush after only 7 months' incarceration.

Rebekah Charleston — President Trump granted a full pardon to Rebekah Charleston. Ms. Charleston's pardon is supported by her friends, family, and even the Special Agent who arrested her in 2006 for tax evasion.

Ms. Charleston is a victim of sex trafficking who has suffered a litany of abuses and endured a life of forced prostitution. Despite these hardships, Ms. Charleston has become a champion for survivors of all crimes, particularly sex trafficking. She obtained a master's degree in criminal justice and has worked tirelessly to give a voice to the voiceless victims of sex trafficking. Ms. Charleston volunteers much of her time helping those who are currently or have previously been victims.

Rickey Kanter — President Trump granted a full pardon to Rickey Kanter. Mr. Kanter was the owner and CEO of Dr. Comfort, a company which manufactures special shoes and inserts for diabetics. Although there was no evidence that Dr. Comfort's customers were ever harmed by the company's shoe inserts, the company and Mr. Kanter settled claims in civil court regarding shoe inserts that were technically non-compliant with Medicare regulations. It was only after this point when the Federal Government filed a criminal action against Mr. Kanter. Mr. Kanter pled guilty to one count of mail fraud and completed his sentence of one year and one day in 2012. Since his period of incarceration, Mr. Kanter has been a model member of his community.

Topeka Sam — President Trump granted a full pardon to Topeka Sam. This pardon is supported by Alice Johnson and David Safavian.

Ms. Sam's life is a story of redemption. She has become a powerful advocate for criminal justice reform since she completed 3 years of a 130-month sentence she received in 2012 as a result of pleading guilty to one count of conspiracy to possess and distribute cocaine. Ms. Sam has since dedicated her life to helping other women in need turn from a path of despair towards a path of redemption. Ms. Sam founded Ladies of Hope Ministries, where she helps formerly incarcerated women transition back into society through education, entrepreneurship, spiritual empowerment, and advocacy. Along with others, she championed the historic First Step Act that President Trump signed in to law in 2018.

James Batmasian — President Trump granted a full pardon to James Batmasian. Mr. Batmasian's pardon is supported by Representative Brian Mast, Alice Johnson, and former Masters Champion Bernhard Langer, among many others from the South Florida community that Mr. Batmasian has done so much to serve through his extensive charitable works.

Mr. Batmasian runs an extensive property management business in South Florida. Over a three-year period from 2001 to 2003, Mr. Batmasian made overtime payments without withholding for income taxes or FICA contributions. While illegal, Mr. Batmasian

recorded all of these payments and made no attempt to hide them when confronted by IRS investigators. In 2008, Mr. Batmasian pled guilty to willful failure to collect and remit payroll taxes. Mr. Batmasian accepted full responsibility for his actions, fully repaid the IRS the money he owed, and served his 8-month sentence.

William J. Plemons, Jr. — President Trump granted a full pardon to William J. Plemons, Jr. Business associates attest to his generosity and service to children and the underprivileged. His clemency is also supported by Richard Greene, former State Senator of Georgia.

Mr. Plemons served in the U.S. Air Force and was honorably discharged. He has spent decades supporting the Boy Scouts, the Cure Childhood Cancer Hospital, and other charitable efforts. Although he was convicted of various financial crimes in the late 1990s and early 2000s, he has taken responsibility for his conduct, served a sentence of 27 months in prison, and paid \$400,000 in restitution.

Russell Plaisance — President Trump granted a full posthumous pardon to Russell Plaisance. His clemency is supported by numerous local officials, including the Sheriff of the parish. The prosecutor on his case also does not object to a pardon.

In life, Mr. Plaisance built a tug boat business from the ground up that has grown into seven vessels and employment for over 50 individuals. He has also contributed his time and resources to local charitable causes. His Federal case, dating back to 1987, involves a single count of conspiracy to import cocaine stemming from one conversation in which he participated. The sentencing judge called the event “totally inconsistent with [Mr. Plaisance’s] life history and [his] character.” Mr. Plaisance is survived by his wife of 54 years, children, and grandchildren.

Daniela Gozes-Wagner — President Trump commuted the sentence and restitution order imposed upon Ms. Gozes-Wagner. Numerous former law-enforcement officials, including U.S. Attorneys General Michael Mukasey, Ed Meese, Ramsey Clark, and John Ashcroft; Acting Attorneys General Peter Keisler and Matt Whitaker; an FBI Director, two U.S. Solicitors General, and scores of U.S. Attorneys, among others, have supported

commutation for Ms. Gosez-Wager, arguing that she received a disproportionate sentence. The Aleph Institute also supports her commutation.

Ms. Wagner is a single mother of two children who has been in federal custody since her 2017 conviction for health care fraud and money laundering. Ms. Gozes-Wagner worked as a mid-level manager for a company that improperly received Medicare and Medicaid funds. Of the individuals in Ms. Gozes-Wagner's case, Ms. Gozes-Wagner was the only defendant to go to trial. She received a sentence of 20 years' imprisonment and was ordered to pay \$15.2 million in restitution. This sentence was significantly more severe than the sentences imposed on the other defendants, several of whom played a more central role in the fraud. Her sentence was criticized by numerous former high-ranking U.S. officials as disproportionate to her crime.

Mark Siljander — President Trump granted a full pardon to Mark Siljander. His pardon is supported by Former United States Attorney General Edwin Meese, former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich, former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, Alabama Congressman Robert Aderholt, and Pastor Andrew Brunson.

Mr. Siljander served in the U.S. House of Representatives for 6 years, representing the people of Michigan's 4th district. During his time in Congress, Mr. Siljander was one of Congress' most stalwart defenders of pro-life principles and the namesake of the "Siljander Amendment," which prohibits U.S. funds from being used to lobby for or against abortion.

Mr. Siljander served a year in prison for obstruction of justice and failing to register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act. Since his incarceration, Mr. Siljander has devoted himself to traveling in the Middle East and Africa to promote peace and mutual understanding.

Stephanie Mohr — President Trump granted a full pardon to Stephanie Mohr. Her clemency is supported by the Law Enforcement Legal Defense Fund and the Fraternal Order of Police.

Ms. Mohr was a police officer in Prince George's County where she achieved the distinction of being the first female canine handler in the Department's history. She served 10 years in prison for releasing her K-9 partner on a burglary suspect in 1995, resulting in a bite wound requiring ten stitches. Officer Mohr was a highly commended member of the police force prior to her prosecution. Today's action recognizes that service and the lengthy term that Ms. Mohr served in prison.

Gary Brugman — President Trump granted a full pardon to Gary Brugman. His clemency is supported by numerous elected officials, including Lt. Governor Dan Patrick, Senators Ted Cruz and John Cornyn, Representative Louie Gohmert, Representative Ted Poe, Representative Steve King, Representative Paul Gosar, Representative Walter Jones, Representative Brian Babin, and Representative John Culberson. Others who support this pardon include Laura Ingraham, Sara Carter, Glenn Beck, Lou Dobbs, Bernie Kerik, and numerous members of the U.S. Border Patrol.

Mr. Brugman served this country for 8 years in the Coast Guard and then for 4 years as a U.S. Border Patrol agent. While protecting our borders at Eagle Pass, Texas, Mr. Brugman intercepted nearly a dozen illegal immigrants, pursued them on foot, and apprehended them. Mr. Brugman was accused of knocking one of the illegal immigrants to the ground and was prosecuted on that basis for deprivation of rights. He served 27 months in prison, where other inmates sought to harm him because of his law enforcement background. After being released from prison, Mr. Brugman went on to obtain his Bachelor's degree in Business Administration and Management.

John Tate and Jesse Benton — President Trump granted John Tate and Jesse Benton full pardons. This action is supported by Senator Rand Paul and Lee Goodman, former Chairman of the Federal Election Commission. Both Mr. Tate and Mr. Benton were convicted based on indirect campaign payments to a state Senator. According to Mr. Goodman, the reporting law violated was unclear and not well established at the time. Each individual received 6 months home confinement and 2 years' probation.

Charles Kushner — President Trump granted a full pardon to Charles Kushner. Former United States Attorney for the District of Utah Brett Tolman and the American Conservative Union’s Matt Schlapp and David Safavian support a pardon of Mr. Kushner. Since completing his sentence in 2006, Mr. Kushner has been devoted to important philanthropic organizations and causes, such as Saint Barnabas Medical Center and United Cerebral Palsy. This record of reform and charity overshadows Mr. Kushner’s conviction and 2 year sentence for preparing false tax returns, witness retaliation, and making false statements to the FEC.

Margaret Hunter— President Trump granted a full pardon to Margaret Hunter. According to former Federal Election Commission Commissioner Bradley Smith, the conduct forming the basis of Ms. Hunter’s 2019 guilty plea to one count of conspiracy to misuse campaign funds for personal expenses should have been treated as a civil case by the agency. Mrs. Hunter was sentenced to three years’ probation. President Trump previously issued a full pardon to former Congressman Hunter for the same alleged conduct.

Paul Manafort—Today, President Trump has issued a full and complete pardon to Paul Manafort, stemming from convictions prosecuted in the course of Special Counsel Mueller’s investigation, which was premised on the Russian collusion hoax. Mr. Manafort has already spent two years in prison, including a stretch of time in solitary confinement – treatment worse than what many of the most violent criminals receive. As a result of blatant prosecutorial overreach, Mr. Manafort has endured years of unfair treatment and is one of the most prominent victims of what has been revealed to be perhaps the greatest witch hunt in American history. As Mr. Manafort’s trial judge observed, prior to the Special Counsel investigation, Mr. Manafort had led an “otherwise blameless life.” Since May, Mr. Manafort has been released to home confinement as a result of COVID-19 concerns.

Roger Stone— Today, President Trump granted a full and unconditional pardon to Roger Stone, Jr. President Trump had previously commuted Mr. Stone’s sentence in July of this year. Mr. Stone is a 68-year-old man with numerous medical conditions. Due to

prosecutorial misconduct by Special Counsel Mueller's team, Mr. Stone was treated very unfairly. He was subjected to a pre-dawn raid of his home, which the media conveniently captured on camera. Mr. Stone also faced potential political bias at his jury trial. Pardoning him will help to right the injustices he faced at the hands of the Mueller investigation.

Mark Shapiro and Irving Stitsky — President Trump granted commutations to Mark Shapiro and Irving Stitsky, for the remainder of both of their sentences. Messrs. Shapiro and Stitsky founded a real estate investing firm, but hid their prior felony convictions and used a straw CEO. Due to the 2008 financial crisis, the business lost millions for its investors.

Prior to trial, prosecutors offered Messrs. Shapiro and Stitsky plea agreements for 5 to 7 years and 7 to 9 years, respectively. Both declined the deal and exercised their Constitutional right to a jury trial. Both men were found guilty and sentenced to 85 years imprisonment. This sentence was over 10 times the plea offer for Mr. Shapiro and almost 10 times the plea offer for Mr. Stitsky. Messrs. Shapiro and Stitsky have already served more time than their plea offers.

Since their incarceration, both men have become model prisoners, earning support and praise from their fellow inmates. Mr. Shapiro has renewed his faith in Judaism and taught fellow inmates the dangers of dishonesty, while Mr. Stitsky has reflected on the victims of his crime and the remorse that he now has.

This clemency is supported by the Aleph Institute, Alice Johnson, several criminal justice advocacy groups, former Attorney General Edwin Meese, former Deputy Attorney General Larry Thompson, former District Judge William Bassler, former United States Attorneys Brett Tolman and James Reynolds, Professors of Law Bennett Gershman and Harold Krent, and several of the victims.



The White House



President Donald J. Trump

Vice President Mike Pence

First Lady Melania Trump

Mrs. Karen Pence

The Cabinet

Administration Accomplishments

News

Remarks

Articles

Presidential Actions

Briefings & Statements

About The White House

Economy & Jobs

Budget & Spending

Education

Immigration

National Security & Defense

Healthcare

Council of Economic Advisers

Council of Environmental Quality

National Security Council

Office of Management and Budget

Office of National Drug Control Policy

Office of Science and Technology Policy